

Epitaph of M. Verrius Flaccus. By Rev. C. W. King, M.A.

(*Read before the American Philosophical Society, December 16, 1887.*)

The collection of antiquities of Count D'Hérison, the result of long-continued excavations in Apulia and around Carthage, comprised a marble slab, described in the sale catalogue as "The Epitaph of M. Verrio and his brother, Celsus, with two skulls and an axe." But the Count could boast of resembling the "Divine Williams" (as he would call him) in one point at least—that "he had small Latin," for the merest novice in that language could easily read the inscription as: "To Marcus Verrius Flaccus, son of Marcus, of the Tribe Falerina, his brother Celsus [erected this]." I subjoin a *fac-simile* of the epitaph, showing the arrangement and relative proportions of the lettering.

M. VERRIO

M. F. FAL. FLACCO

CELSVS . FRATER.

The inscription is cut in the round, bold character used in the later days of the Republic, and which did not outlast the first century of the Empire. The material is a slab (2 ft. 4 in. by 1 ft. 6 in.) of the marble of Paros, the quarries of Luni (Carrara) were but recently opened when Pliny wrote. The back of the slab has been left very uneven and rough, for the purpose of taking better hold upon the bedding of mortar by which it was inserted in the façade of the tomb, no doubt a brick construction. The once-polished surface is much weathered, giving evidence of the many centuries for which it had retained its original position (and, probably, had witnessed the fall of that Empire with whose birth it was nearly coëval) before it was buried in the earth along with the ruins of the monument. About a third of the surface shows more corrosion than the rest, in consequence of having been covered to this extent by the mortar and the rubbish.

Before attempting to identify the individual thus commemorated, I shall remark that the *Verria* was a plebeian family, and the *Falerina*, in which it was registered, a rustic tribe. "Flaccus" was the actual name of the deceased; for the "Nomen" and "Tribus" of the *Verrius* had been, according to rule, assumed by his father, originally a slave, on becoming a freedman of that family. That "Flaccus" was a word of some *Italic* dialect, perhaps *Oscan*, in which similar forms occur, as "Maccus," etc., and that, with "Bassus," "Varus," and the like, it denoted some personal peculiarity in the first who bore it, cannot reasonably be doubted, and it may have been synonymous with *pen-*

dulus, in the sense of "lop-eared," * as its derivative *flaccidus* is applied to anything that droops. So far, the marble is of little importance in itself, except as a fine specimen of early Roman epigraphy; but fortunately, this is one of those very uncommon cases, where the name and fame of the deceased are embalmed in history, a circumstance that gives a far higher value to any memorial of the man.

We learn from Suetonius that M. Verrius Flaccus was the son of a freedman (*libertinus*) as was the father of his contemporary and namesake, Horace. He possessed a remarkable talent for teaching; his plan was (apparently an invention of his own) to give his pupils subjects for declamations in which they should compete with each other for the prize, which was a book, valuable either for its *antiquity* or its beauty. The novelty of his system of education appears to have consisted in this. Induced by his high reputation, Augustus appointed him Præceptor to his grandsons, Caius and Lucius; with a salary of one hundred *sestertia* (£1000) a year. He furthermore lodged him with his whole class (of twenty boys) in the palace, making, however, the stipulation that he was not to increase the number of his pupils. Flaccus compiled a Table of Fasti, which was engraved on marble slabs in the *hemicyclium* (alcove) at Præneste, where his statue was standing when Suetonius wrote. He died at an advanced age, under Tiberius.

Ovid refers (Fast. vi, 58) to this work of our Flaccus, where he makes Juno say :

"Inspice quos habeat nemoralis Aricia fastos
Et populus Laurens Lanuviumque nemus :
Est illis mensis Junonius : inspice Tibur ;
Et Prænestinæ mania sacra Deæ."

According to this, the Tables of Fasti were built into the walls of the celebrated Temple of Fortune, the special Deity of Præneste. This explanation has been confirmed by a fortunate discovery. In the year 1770, Foggini, a Roman antiquary, excavated the ancient Forum of Præneste, and came upon the ruins of a circular [semi-circular?] building, from amongst which he recovered the tablets containing the Kalendar for the months January, March, April, and September, in a perfect state, together with numerous fragments of the others. †

Our Verrius appears to have been held of high authority in matters of antiquity, for Pliny quotes him no fewer than seven times, and always upon curious subjects, as the following will show : "That the Romans upon laying siege to a town, began by evoking the presiding deities of the place (*in quorum Tutela*) by promising them equal or greater honors at

* The *cognomen* "Flaccus" is probably an Oscan word, denoting a personal peculiarity, and signifying "lop-eared."

† Prof. Nettleship, of Oxford, has skillfully reconstructed the plan of Verrius' great work, "De Verborum Significatione," in the American Philological Review, Vol. i, p. 253-70, and ii, p. 1-19.

Rome. A form of evocation was still preserved in the Pontifical Books, and the true name of the guardian of Rome was kept a secret (like the *Shem Hamephorash* of the Jews) for fear some enemy might use it for the same purpose."

"That *Vermilion* was in such estimation with the ancients, that the face of Jupiter Capitolinus was painted therewith on the great festivals; also the faces of generals while they rode in triumph, citing Camillus as an example."

"That Tarquinius Priscus wore a state tunic woven out of gold wire (as was that of Virgil's Lausus)—

Molli mater quam neverat auro.—*Æn.* x, 818.

and like that worn by Agrippina at the opening of the tunnel draining Lake Fucinus."

"That lampreys have *thin*, eels *thick* skins, which were by the ancient laws used for flogging *pueros prætextatos, i. e.*, boys under age, because they were not liable to pecuniary fines; according to the rule that 'he who cannot pay in purse must pay in person.'" Verrius had, furthermore, recorded many instances of *sudden* deaths (which Pliny considers the height of felicity) from joy and similar causes. "That the Romans, for the first three centuries, were not acquainted with *wheat*, but lived upon *spelt* in the shape of porridge (*farre e frumento*)." It is true, that the earliest coins of Metapontum attest that bearded wheat, *tritium*, was the staple in Southern Italy at a period ranging from 700 to 400 B. C.; but the Romans had no intercourse with those parts before the war with Pyrrhus. *Spelt* is the primitive form of the cereal just emerging from the state of a grass-seed; the grains are smooth and very thinly arranged in a long ear. Varro, also, gives the actual date when bakers first came to Rome from Greece, before which time, the inhabitants used the grain only as porridge, *puls*, exactly as the Red Men of our day eat their maize in the shape of *hominy*. Similarly, this simple preparation of grain constituted the national food of the Celts when they had ceased to live entirely upon the flesh and milk of their cattle, for the ill-tempered Jerome, squabbling with the Irishman, Celestinus, despatches him with the sarcasm:

"Hoc non videt Celestinus,
Celtarum *pultibus* prægravatus."

And Ammianus mentions that Julian, in the disastrous retreat from Persia, eat nothing but "parum pultis etiam gregario militi *fastidendum*," and we must remember that the main strength of the Roman army lay in the Gauls and Germans who had followed the Emperor from the West.

"That the Romans once (the date is not specified) exhibited fighting elephants in the circus; and afterwards, killed them with darts because they knew not what to do with them; not being willing to bear the expense of keeping such huge beasts; or to make presents of them to foreign princes."

These casual extracts sufficiently indicate that had the "Antiquities of Verrius" come down to us, it would have proved as valuable a mine of information for Roman as the "Deipnosophists" of Athenæus is for Grecian archæology.

The *prænomen* borne by Flaccus is not recorded by Suetonius, but Jerome, in his Chronicle, gives it as "Marcus," and puts down the grammarian as flourishing (*floruit*) at the same time with the philosopher Athenodorus of Tarsus. The agreement, therefore, of our inscription with Jerome in this important particular, is strong evidence that both of them are to be referred to the same person, whose date, again, is all but precisely fixed by the archæological proofs deducible from the monument itself.

A "T. Verrius" is one of the Decemviri of Saragossa who coined brass pieces in the name of Augustus in the eleventh year of his reign. Can this man have been the *father* of our grammarian? Certainly the name of his colleague, "C. Allarius," has so plebeian a sound that we can hardly think it beneath his dignity to have been joined in office with a manumitted slave.

Two skulls, an axe, and an iron bangle, came to London with the monument as having been discovered in the same tomb. These human relics are very remarkable in themselves. The one is that of a man so advanced in life that the *sutures* are entirely obliterated, yet the teeth are sound, though much worn down on one side, as if the owner for some cause had chewed on *that* in preference to the other. The form is unusually elongated, the forehead low but very broad, indicating considerable mental power.

The other skull is the head of a young man, finely-shaped, with teeth of the most exquisite regularity and enamel. As even an Italian *antiquario* could hardly attempt to pass them off (like the celebrated *duplicates* of Cromwell) as those of the *same* man in youth and age, or we may suspect that the mistranslation of the epitaph, as given in the Sale-catalogue, suggested the *discovery* of the remains of the *two* brothers. We must attribute them (if really found in company with the marble) to long subsequent interments in its vicinity. But the question of ownership in the matter of these relics of humanity is, to me, settled by another consideration. It was as impossible for the corpse of Augustus' schoolmaster to have been laid entire in the earth, as it was, but a few years back, for that of an Englishman of the same *status* in his profession, to have been "cremated." That these *crania* should be given to some of the barbarous races, who, long after the times of Verrius, so frequently overran Apulia, may reasonably be conjectured from the articles deposited with them. The *axe*, though greatly corroded, preserves the exact form of the missile *francisca*, the so much dreaded weapon that got its name from the Franks. And the *bangle*, a flat bar one inch in width, meant to be permanently fixed upon the wearer's wrist by the hammering-up of the two ends till they overlap, is an ornament used only by savages. Add to which, the sound condition

of the teeth of the elder defunct at so advanced an age, is a sure proof that he had never enjoyed "the blessings of civilization." (These *crania* are now deposited in the Museum of the College of Surgeons.)

It is so rare to meet with the actual memorials of personages named, ever so incidentally in Roman history, that have escaped "The Goth, the Christian, Time, War, Flood, and Fire," that this marble may justly be reckoned amongst the most interesting relics of antiquity that have come down to our times. As the monument of a great scholar, who enjoyed so high a reputation in the brightest days of literature, no more fitting shrine for its preservation could have been found than the library of Trinity College, where the *Manes* of the ancient Professor will, after so many centuries of oblivion, hear his name and fame once more echoed by thousands of voices—and be (let us hope) propitious to the depositor who has thus carried out the last desire of the tormented ghost:

"Rinfresca la memoria mia che giace."

Obituary Notice of Ferdinand Vandevere Hayden, M.D., Ph.D., LL.D.

By Prof. J. P. Lesley.

(Read before the American Philosophical Society, January 20, 1888.)

Dr. Hayden was born in Westfield, Mass., September 7, 1829; was graduated from Oberlin College, Ohio, in 1850; and received a diploma from the Albany Medical College in 1853. Under the orders of Prof. James Hall of Albany, he went with Mr. F. B. Meek to collect Cretaceous and Tertiary fossils in the White River Bad Lands. In 1854-5 he explored the upper Missouri river region, mainly at his own expense, aided by the American Fur Company; following the Missouri river to Fort Benton, and the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Big Horn. His collections of fossils were sent partly to the Academy of Natural Sciences in St. Louis, and partly to the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. In 1856 he made a summary report of the whole region which he had explored to Lieutenant Warren, U.S.T.E., and immediately began a general reconnaissance of the North-west as geologist on Warren's staff. This survey extended to 1859. The next three years, to 1862, he explored the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers as naturalist and surgeon to Captain Reynolds' expedition. The Civil War having broken out, Dr. Hayden, in May, 1862, was appointed Acting Assistant Surgeon of Volunteers and placed in charge, first of Satterlee Hospital in Philadelphia, and then (February, 1863, as full Surgeon of Volunteers) of Beaufort, South Carolina. February,